

5. Enhance the safety of vehicles and pedestrians - The Project will eliminate or grade separate four existing at-grade roadway/rail crossings along the CSXT SF Line, thereby improving safety for vehicles and pedestrians by reducing the potential for train and vehicle/pedestrian collisions.
6. Improve interstate commerce - The Project is vital for the growing port-to-market intermodal shipping that is increasing across the U.S. The Port of Wilmington to Charlotte corridor has been identified in CSXT's National Gateway initiative as integral to improving efficiency for freight rail between mid-Atlantic ports and Midwest markets. NS has included Charlotte as part of the NS Crescent Corridor to increase capacity from Louisiana to New Jersey. Both CSXT and NS have also already received Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) Section 1306 funds to expand intermodal capacity at their respective intermodal yards in Charlotte. As this intermodal traffic grows, the grade separation will be needed to make certain this increased interstate traffic does not encounter a bottleneck in Center City Charlotte.
7. Improve local air quality - The Project will eliminate the idling of CSXT locomotives waiting for clearance of the CSXT/NS at-grade intersection and will eliminate the subsequent vehicular traffic delays caused by CSXT freight trains blocking the adjacent at-grade roadway/rail crossings. Eliminating the idling trains and idling vehicles will reduce emissions, thereby improving air quality for the businesses and residences surrounding the existing CSXT/NS at-grade intersection.
8. Improve the local quality of life and area commerce - The Project will reduce area noise: (1) by eliminating the need for CSXT freight trains to sound their horns within the Project area due to the existing at-grade intersection; (2) by eliminating the idling engine noise created when CSXT freight trains await clearance from NS to access the existing at-grade intersection; and (3) by eliminating the "banging" noise caused by trains traveling through the existing diamond rail intersection. The grade separation will also eliminate the ensuing traffic congestion caused by trains blocking various roadway-rail at-grade crossings while waiting for clearance. The Project will also include construction of a new street to allow access to area businesses during construction, and will include bridges over the CSXT line to accommodate vehicular and pedestrian access in the area. As this area of Center City Charlotte continues to grow, eliminating and mitigating the negative impacts from the adjacent rail operations will be critical.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

NCDOT considered a reasonable range of alternatives for the proposed action. These alternatives included the No-Build Alternative, and various Build Alternatives. Each alternative was assessed with respect to its ability to meet the Project's purpose and need and possible impacts on the environment.